

# Kentucky Teacher™

SEPTEMBER 2003

## One test, blended accountability is board's approach to NCLB compliance

By Faun S. Fishback

Kentucky will begin using a blended accountability system in the 2005-2006 school year to meet requirements of the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The blended system holds public schools and districts accountable for meeting both federal and state requirements on the tests that comprise the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS).

At its August meeting, the Kentucky Board of Education underscored its confidence in CATS and Kentucky's high academic expectations for all public school students. The state board decided to preserve CATS while still complying with the new federal education law by creating a second accountability system.

The only changes to CATS will be the addition beginning in 2005-2006 of augmented norm-referenced tests in mathematics at grades 4 and 7 and in reading at grades 5 and 8. Two open-response questions designed to

measure Kentucky's core content will augment each norm-referenced test. This allows Kentucky to comply with the federal requirement for reading and mathematics tests to be administered in grades 3-8 each school year.

The blended system will use data from CATS to compute adequate yearly progress for schools in reading and mathematics for No Child Left Behind. The board adopted goals for No Child Left Behind compliance in both content areas at the elementary, middle and high school levels. The goals will apply to each school and its subpopulations. If a school has sufficient numbers of students in one or more subpopulation (defined by poverty, race, disability or English proficiency), the school will have specific accountability goals for those subpopulations in addition to an accountability goal for the total student population.

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Photo by Rick McComb

### Angling for Accuracy

Tates Creek High School student Eric Beck measures an angle for a physics lab experiment on the principles of a grandfather clock. Part of his final exam last spring, the scientific inquiry required Eric and his classmates to collect data, graph their findings and write an equation to minimize measurement error.

## CATS Online '03 gets favorable technical reviews

By Fran Salyers

For the most part, educators and students who participated in CATS Online '03, the first online administration of the Kentucky Core Content Tests, gave high marks to most aspects of the Web-based alternative for students whose disabilities make traditional pencil-and-paper testing difficult.

Responses to surveys after testing in spring 2003 were predominantly positive. The Kentucky Department of Education is working to correct the few reported glitches with computer hardware and network connection problems. The department plans to streamline resources and instructions that support test preparation before spring 2004.

"Based on feedback from district and school administrators, teachers and students, we are confident that if a student is in an instructional environment where materials and assessments are routinely delivered electronically — using screen/text reading software — online testing is an appropriate and effective accommodation for certain students," said Scott Trimble, the department's associate commissioner for assessment and accountability.

"Using a computer with software that reads the test aloud, students with disabilities can take Kentucky's core content tests the same way they have been learning all year. They no longer require human readers as part

of their testing accommodations," Trimble continued. "It is critical that this accommodation is offered only when instruction has routinely been delivered via this technology. Assessment does not result in higher scores; instruction in specific content does. Without this instructional dimension, we are faced with both a question of ethics detailed in 703 KAR 5:070 and a question of test score validity."

There were, in some cases, technical problems during test administration. Schools and districts using this procedure must be prepared to backup this delivery system with traditional readers if necessary, he added.

Preston Lewis of the department's Division of Exceptional Children Ser-

vices said online testing is an important accommodation for students with disabilities. "Being able to take the test independently has moved these students from stigma to status," he said. "Instead of saying 'I have to have a human reader or writer to take the tests all of the other students are taking on their own,' they can say 'I take my tests on (a) computer.' This is an incredible boost to their independence and self-esteem."

Web-based testing is available only to students who meet these requirements:

- have an individual education plan (IEP) or 504 plan that includes the need for a "reader" as an instruc-

See CATS on Page 9

# Good news heralds a good school year

By Gene Wilhoit  
Commissioner of Education

I know it's going to be a great year for education in Kentucky!

How do I know? Reports released over the past two months provide data to support the steady progress our schools are making toward our state goal of proficiency. Just as important, our students are competing at higher levels than ever before with their peers across the nation.

For much of our history, Kentucky has ranked among the poorest performing states in many education indicators. Education in Kentucky has suffered from 100 years of statewide neglect, and it was only a scant 13 years ago that we began digging ourselves out of that hole.

We continue to build on a decade of progress in education. We are a dedicated education community united on an ambitious, achievable, measurable goal: to get all schools to the high standard of proficiency and beyond by 2014. You are making that happen in your classrooms — and the data supports it!

In July, we received good news with the release of non-academic data from the 2001-2002 school year. Drop-out rates are declining, fewer students are being retained and school attendance is increasing. For the first time, Kentucky is ranked above the national average in the percentage of high school graduates between the ages of 25 and 34.

Kentucky's college-bound seniors from the class of 2003 showed a slight gain on the composite ACT score over last year while the national composite score remained the same. The really good news is that 73 percent of our seniors took the ACT last year to meet the requirement of postsecondary institutions. Nearly two-and-a-half times more 2003 graduates reported taking a rigorous college-bound curriculum than did 1990 graduates.

You are showing our young people that they need to stay in school to be



Photo by Dona Rains, Paducah Public Schools

Commissioner Wilhoit talks with 5th-graders in Jennifer Wiersma's class at Morgan Elementary during their first day back at school in Paducah Public Schools.

successful in their adult lives. More public school students are attending college and completing their degree work. Others are entering the work force prepared with job skills their employers desire.

The release of scores from the spring 2003 Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) also brought good news. In reading comprehension, language arts and mathematics, end-of-primary students turned in the strongest performance. They posted gains in average scores of up to three percentiles in all three subjects tested. Sixth- and 9th-graders also showed improvement in most areas. (See accompanying chart.)

Since non-academic data and CTBS scores are two of the three components used to determine a school's accountability index in the Commonwealth Accountability Testing System (CATS), I can't wait for the release of that third component — the results of the Kentucky Core Content Tests taken last spring!

There's good news about our testing system also. At its August meet-

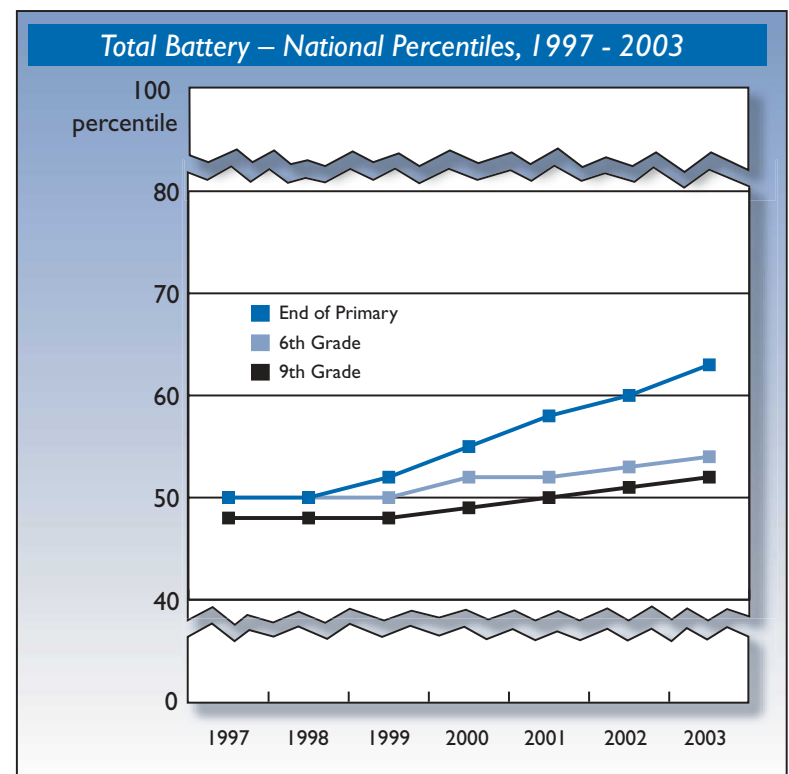
ing, the Kentucky Board of Education decided to use a blended accountability system to comply with the requirements of the federal No Child

Left Behind Act of 2001. That decision underscored the reliability of CATS to accurately measure education progress for both state and federal purposes.

You can look back proudly over what Kentucky's classroom teachers and school administrators have accomplished since 1990. I hope you are looking forward to this new school year with the knowledge that you are doing your part to make certain every Kentucky public school student has the opportunity to master our core content and achieve at high levels.

Each of you is important to student success and school success. I thank you in advance for every effort you will expend this school year to build on the achievements of the past decade. I thank you also for dedication to our goal of proficiency and beyond for every school by 2014.

To comment on this topic, phone the commissioner at (502) 564-3141 or send e-mail to [gwilhoit@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:gwilhoit@kde.state.ky.us)





# Don't judge our schools until you understand what you're asking us to do

By Wilson Sears  
Superintendent, Somerset Public Schools

The emergence and popularity of private schools and home schooling is evidence to me that a bombardment of negative rhetoric has influenced a significant portion of Kentucky's population into believing that public schools are failing. Ironically, most of that negative rhetoric has come from individuals who know virtually nothing about schools and who believe the only way to promote private schools is through the demise of public education.

Educators in public schools are ardent advocates of public education, but we rarely take time from working with kids to speak positively about what we do. As we begin a new school year, let me depart from that pattern and address some of the positives about public schools and our profession.

On a daily basis, public schools are required to teach regular education, vocational education, special education, alternative education, bilingual education and adult education. We provide counseling for everything from whether or not to go to Harvard to what to do about an abusive boyfriend.

We devise dropout prevention programs; monitor and enforce attendance laws; and provide student transportation, health and psychological services, food services, family resource services, child care services, security and violence prevention. And we offer every sport imaginable!

America's public schools educate almost 6 million students who are handicapped, 6.2 million who have limited English proficiency, and almost a million who can't speak English at all. In Kentucky alone, we now have students speaking at least 74 different languages.

America's public schools educate 2 million latchkey children and a half-

million from foster and institutional care. Two million of our students are abused and neglected by their families or others; another 375,000 suffer from drug-related births or fetal alcohol syndrome. We have 500,000 students with no permanent address. One in eight students lives with a single mother who did not finish high school.

We are educating some 10 million kids who live in poverty.

In my opinion, it is amazing how successful public education is in this country when you consider the odds against success! Private schools can screen candidates and deny entrance to anyone who doesn't meet their self-determined standards. They can dismiss any student who misbehaves or fails to meet academic standards.

At public schools we educate all children, and we accept the challenge. But wouldn't it be interesting to see how public schools would compare to private schools if we could also "pick and choose" our students?

Low test scores, high dropout rates, lack of discipline, uncaring teachers – these are some of the many myths that critics disingenuously sell. Please allow me to dispel the one myth that bothers me most: that public schools have forsaken the teaching of faith-based values. Really? Let's look at what public schools do on a daily basis:

- We teach and encourage respect for friends and a love for families and parents.
- We teach that it is wrong to threaten, use violence, steal, destroy property, gamble, use profanity or defy authority, and we hold students accountable for their actions.
- We provide clothing and food to those in need.
- We teach students to give, share and donate in projects and service to others.

- We encourage love of country.

- We teach and encourage young people to be responsible regarding their sexuality.

- We emphasize that consideration of others, honesty, graciousness, good manners, decency and a sense of fair play are important to the existence of productive families, schools, and communities.

If you want to see principled and ethical behavior being taught and what many call "God's work" being done, I suggest you look in our public schools!

When you hear public schools and public educators criticized, invite the critics to walk our halls, visit our classrooms and evaluate the level of achievement our students are required to master. Encourage them to compare the academic requirements of today with the "good ol' days." Ask them to observe and interact with our teachers and see how much classroom and preparation time they give to kids.

If the critics observe shortcomings, ask them not to judge all of public education based on the shortcomings of a few – and then encourage them to join you in solving the problems they see.

Be proud of our noble profession. Stand up for public schools and be positive, especially about the overwhelming majority of high-quality people we have working with our children. I'm proud to have been a part of public education for 40 years and counting. I believe Kentucky public schools are better than ever.



Photo by Tom Lewis, Kentucky Educational Development Corp.

**Superintendent Wilson Sears**

To contact Superintendent Sears on this topic, phone (606) 679-4451 or send e-mail to [wsears@somerset.k12.ky.us](mailto:wsears@somerset.k12.ky.us).

## KTLC presenter proposal deadline is extended

Educators who want to share their proven instructional strategies and measurable successes at the Kentucky Teaching and Learning Conference (KTLC) have an additional 18 days to submit their presenter proposals. The new deadline for submitting an application to present is Sept. 30.

KTLC is the state's major professional development opportunity for public school educators. The event will be held March 4-6, 2004, at the Kentucky International Convention Center in Louisville.

The application form and information about what the application requires, how the proposal will be evaluated and how to submit the application can be found on the conference Web site at [www.kentuckytlc.org](http://www.kentuckytlc.org). The Web site also contains links to conference registration, exhibitor registration and lodging.

# This class is really cookin'!

## North Hopkins High perfects recipes for learning

By Joy Barr

Maroon Catering had everything ready when members of the Madisonville-Hopkins County Chamber of Commerce arrived for lunch. From the available menu options, the members had selected chicken spaghetti, tossed salad, rolls and the ultimate dessert, chocolate mousse pie.

The civic and business leaders hire Maroon Catering to provide lunches at most of their monthly meetings. In the process, they see public education at work. Maroon Catering is an enterprise based at North Hopkins High School. The cooks and servers are students in the school's culinary skills class.

The students prepare, deliver and serve the meals, taking care to plan menus that are appetizing, attractive and nutritious. They also prepare food for several school-sponsored events and host hospitality rooms for coaches during sporting events. Maroon Catering's service includes accommodations for diabetics, vegetarians and others who have special dietary needs.

Tina Peyton, family and consumer science teacher, instructs the class. Her instruction, based on Kentucky's practical living core content, combines with the catering projects to help students develop skills and work habits that support success in future schooling and careers.

"In addition to learning such skills as planning, organizing, nutrition and food preparation, the students learn about business, marketing and being good consumers," said Peyton. "It truly is a class that can help students make a successful transition from school to career."

The culinary skills class is for juniors and seniors or for students who have already had an introductory foods class. "It is helpful if the student has basic cooking skills. That way we can concentrate on more advanced topics like menu planning and nutritional analysis," said Peyton.

Jim Martin, principal at North Hopkins, is supportive of the catering project. "Mrs. Peyton's class offers a unique opportunity for students to learn and practice real-life skills," he said. "Her classes usually have a waiting list of students wanting to enroll."

Though promoted only by word of mouth, the 4-year-old culinary class continues to grow in popularity. It received national attention when Taste of Home, a nationally distributed cooking magazine, featured Maroon Catering in its June-July 2002 issue. Peyton said her students frequently consult issues of the magazine for menu, recipe and food presentation ideas.

Students say they take the course for various reasons. Ebony Tidwell, a member of the school's Class of 2003, wanted to be able to prepare meals at home. Sarah DiFabio, another recent graduate, has aspirations to be a chef. During her senior year at North Hopkins High, she was making plans to enroll in the culinary program at Sullivan College in Louisville. "I like cooking in my dad's restaurant. I feel really comfortable in the kitchen and want to have a career in the food industry."

Another of last spring's graduates, Chris Baker, said he liked the class because "I get to cook and eat." Students usually sample the foods they prepare, especially when the class is testing new recipes and planning to cater events. However, they do not sample when they are preparing something for a group.

Maroon Catering is in business for learning and experience, not financial profit. Customers pay a small fee, usually \$5 per person, to cover expenses.

For more information about North Hopkins High School culinary skills class, contact Tina Peyton at (270) 825-6017 or tpeyton@hopkins.k12.ky.us.



Photo by Joy Barr

Ebony Tidwell, a culinary skills student at North Hopkins High, helps prepare chocolate pies for a catered luncheon.



## Talk to us!

Kentucky Teacher wants to know what you think, what you need from the Department of Education, what you want to see in future issues.

**E-mail** [kyteacher@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:kyteacher@kde.state.ky.us)

**Phone** (502) 564-3421 or (800) 533-5372  
(toll free in Kentucky)

**Fax** (502) 564-6470

**Write** Kentucky Teacher  
1914 Capital Plaza Tower  
500 Mero St.  
Frankfort, KY 40601



# At Toliver Elementary, technology supports critical-thinking and problem-solving skills

By Joy Barr

Students at Toliver Elementary School in the Danville Independent district use a Web-based computer program, Interactive Multimedia Experiences (popularly known as IMMEX), to learn critical-thinking and problem-solving skills.

IMMEX, identified by The International Society for Technology in Education as a research-based program that works, was developed to help UCLA medical students improve their diagnostic skills. Educators now use the program to help students at all grade levels develop the critical-thinking skills they need throughout life. At Toliver Elementary, teachers in all content areas integrate technology into instruction to encourage student achievement.

JoAnn Hamm, Toliver's technology resource teacher, gives the program high marks. "Technology helps students acquire and organize information and develop higher levels of problem-solving skills," she said.

IMMEX offers students opportunities to analyze various ways to solve problems. It also provides opportunities for self-assessment. After completing each problem, students can use search maps to reflect on why they made certain choices, where they could find the most valuable information and what they could do differently to solve the problem more effectively.

An entire class can work on the same IMMEX exercise, but students will not have the same problem scenario to solve as their neighbors. Each

problem has a set of conditions that determines the problem to be solved.

Toliver's principal, Judy Spellacy, said she could see positive results after two months of using IMMEX at the school. "Our 3rd-, 4th- and 5th-graders worked eagerly and have improved their reasoning skills," she said. She called the software's problem sets "engaging" because variations of the same problem give students multiple opportunities to try different strategies to finding solutions.

"Best of all, IMMEX is free, standards-based and extremely high in quality," Spellacy said. Teachers must schedule a time frame to use the software, but there is no cost.

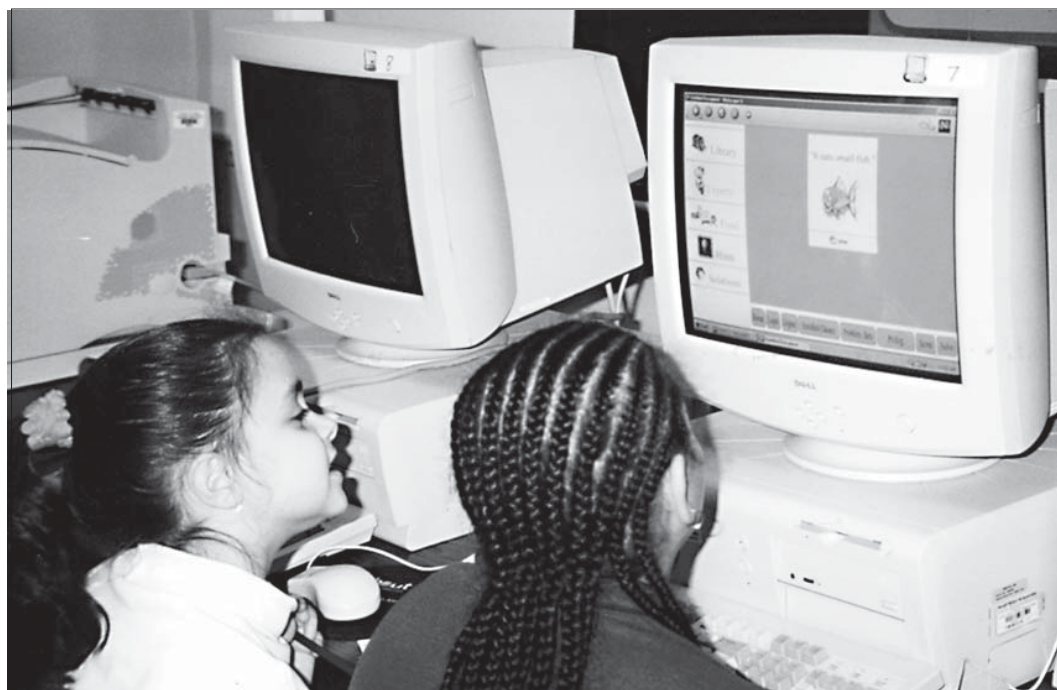
IMMEX search maps let teachers continually evaluate student work and use the data to determine how effectively individuals and groups are do-

ing over time. Teachers also can track how students respond to certain situations and which students need work on investigative and analytical skills and how to integrate concepts.

Lucinda Sanders, a coordinator for technology resource teachers at the Kentucky Department of Education, calls IMMEX "a vehicle for talking about thinking with students. It is a great problem-solving tool. It also can demonstrate how much students actually know."

For more information about Toliver Elementary's technology programs, contact JoAnn Hamm, at (859) 936-8529 or send e-mail to [jhamm@danville.k12.ky.us](mailto:jhamm@danville.k12.ky.us).

New IMMEX users may get information and sign up online at [www.immex.ucla.edu/IMXWeb/default.asp](http://www.immex.ucla.edu/IMXWeb/default.asp).



Students at Toliver Elementary develop problem-solving skills using IMMEX software.

## What we found...

### Teachers

- Ron Ballard, mathematics and science: "The problem-solving component is very strong. When students get a wrong answer they have to think backwards to get the right one."

- Laura Smith, primary: "My students... actually stop to think about the specific information they need to solve problems. Once students caught on, they were really motivated and tried to beat their previous times in solving the problems."

- Sandy Richards, fourth-year primary: "Students learned to verbalize steps of working out a problem. They learned how to work in groups to give and take when solving problems."

- Cindy Stallard, mathematics and science: "One application, Paul's Pepperoni Pizza Palace, provides great practice for the students on deciding which information is needed to solve the problem and which is not."

### Students

- Tre', grade 5: "(IMMEX) is cool and well constructed. It helps you get into mysteries and solve them. It's challenging for kids like us. It makes us smart!"

- Janessa, grade 4: "It lets us solve problems about real things. It's like problems we have every day."

- Ethan, grade 4: "You can learn a lot from the Solar System Settlers and Minerals on 34th Street. You can learn information on the computer that you can use later in class."

- Kayla, grade 4: "I liked solving it. It's like a mystery. On Paul's Pepperoni Pizza Palace, it is even better when you couldn't always use the first way to solve the problem."

- Kaylan, fourth-year primary: "I like answering all the questions. For Paul's Pepperoni Pizza Palace, either I do times or pluses to help me with the clues."

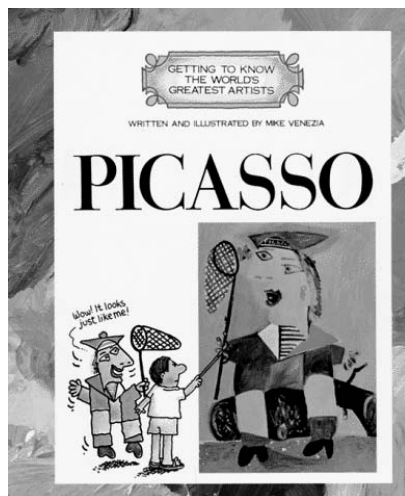
Photo by Joy Barr



EDUCATORS REVIEW BOOKS AND JOURNALS ABOUT THE PROFESSION

## Getting to Know The World's Greatest Artists

A Book Series by Mike Venezia



Mike Venezia is my hero. He is accomplishing what I have dreamed of for years as a teacher of visual art: He makes art history fun and interesting.

Presently there are 37 books in writer/illustrator Venezia's "Getting to Know The World's Greatest Artists" book series, and three more are on the way this year. If you haven't read them, you might not know that Vincent van Gogh sometimes spent all his money on art supplies and ate paint when he had no food; that Salvador Dali thought he received messages from outer space through his outrageous handlebar moustache; or that Grant Wood used his sister and his dentist as models for the farmer and his daughter in the painting "American Gothic."

Venezia's philosophy is that artists were real people and that the quirky, fun information along with the important facts would make students of all ages want to read about them. The books, each approximately 32 pages in length, are generously illustrated

with reproductions of the artists' works and with cartoons about the artists and their lives. The reading level is elementary, but students, teachers and adults of all ages will love these fun and informative books.

In the past two years, I have never had a student complain about having to read one or all of these books. I keep them on a shelf in my classroom and find students reading them on their own if they have free time. The books are available in hardback and paperback versions. I started with the paperback copies but quickly learned that they will not hold up to the abuse that multiple students dish out to any book. I strongly recommend the hardback editions.

For a complete list of Venezia's books and videos, as well as some fun games and information, check the Web at [www.mikevenezia.com](http://www.mikevenezia.com).

The books are available through many outlets, including Amazon.com and Crystal Art Resources ([www.crystalproductions.com](http://www.crystalproductions.com) and (800) 255-8629).

*Reviewed by Glenda Bittner  
Teacher, Heath High School,  
McCracken County*

### Free to Teachers

I teach high school visual art and have incorporated the book series into my curriculum in several ways. I have written summaries for teachers and Accelerated Reader quizzes for 36 of the books. I have created several visual expression assignments based on the reading. I would be delighted to share my work free of charge to any teacher in the state. Contact me at [gbittner@mccracken.k12.ky.us](mailto:gbittner@mccracken.k12.ky.us).

## Boys and Girls Learn Differently! A Guide for Teachers and Parents

By Michael Gurian  
(ISBN 0787953431; Jossey-Bass, 2001)

The title of this book echoes a belief many teachers have long held: Boys and girls do learn differently. Michael Gurian and his co-writers believe that recent research into how male and female brains develop provides evidence of biological differences that are causal factors in the learning differences.

Throughout the book, the authors emphasize that children are individuals and that research on brain development offers a better understanding of the tendencies of boys and girls that contribute to learning differences.

The book begins with a short, clear overview of basic research developments and a section that briefly analyzes the research findings as they apply to differences in learning styles. In the second part of the book, the authors demonstrate how teachers can apply research findings to improve their classrooms.

The final four chapters examine various areas of school life from pre-school through high school using ac-

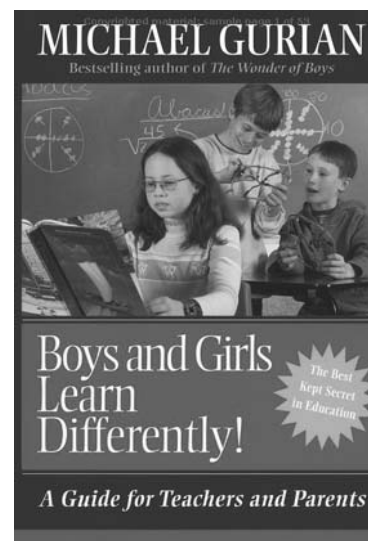
tion research conducted in several school settings throughout the country. From years of observation, collecting teachers' stories of classroom experiences and incorporating brain research findings, the authors provide what they believe to be some of the

best strategies and techniques for teachers and schools to achieve the "ultimate classrooms" for both genders. They offer suggestions to improve instruction and discuss issues such as how to structure schools and classrooms to best meet the needs of both girls and boys.

The book ends with a section of notes, an index and an extensive list of references.

Teachers and administrators are the intended audience for the book, but the book also includes tips parents can use to support and enhance the education of their sons and daughters both at home and in school.

*Reviewed by Jeanetta G. Riley  
Primary teacher, West Broadway  
Elementary (Hopkins County),  
and currently a doctoral student at  
the University of Southern Mississippi*



### Read a good book lately?

To recommend a book, article, software or Web site to other educators, send your review by e-mail to [kyteacher@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:kyteacher@kde.state.ky.us) or by postal mail to Kentucky Teacher, Kentucky Department of Education, 500 Mero St., Frankfort, KY 40601.



# LEADERSHIP LETTER

Compiled by Joy Barr

*Note: "Leadership Letter," published since the early '90s, has become a page in Kentucky Teacher. The change saves money in these tight economic times, but it also puts leadership news into the hands of a wider audience, including teachers who, after all, lead school improvement efforts every day.*

## Highly skilled educator applications available

The Kentucky Department of Education is accepting applications from classroom teachers and school administrators for the Kentucky Highly Skilled Educator Program. If you are ready for a challenge and want the reward that comes with improving teaching and learning in Kentucky schools, you need to apply by Oct. 31.

For more information or an application, visit the department's Web site at [www.kentuckyschools.org](http://www.kentuckyschools.org) and enter "#hseapplication" in the keyword/search box and click "search."

## Kentucky participates in middle-grades reform

The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform has selected Kentucky, Colorado, Illinois and Virginia to implement its Schools to Watch program during 2003-04.

Education leaders in the four states will receive training on how to identify exceptional middle-grades schools as "schools to watch" and support in sharing exemplary practices with less-successful schools.

The states, chosen in a competitive selection process, join California, North Carolina and Georgia in the program.

Schools to Watch began in 1999 to identify middle-grades schools that were academically excellent, developmentally responsive and socially equitable and had organizational supports to sustain success. The program is a continuing effort to replicate the practices of outstanding middle schools.

The Forum's Web site ([www.schoolstowatch.org](http://www.schoolstowatch.org)) features online tours of the effective schools and detailed information about the selection criteria. To learn more, visit [www.mgforum.org](http://www.mgforum.org)



Photo by Rick McComb

### Committed to Education

State Rep. Jimmy Higdon, holding tray, was named this year's recipient of the Joseph W. Kelly Award for his contributions to Kentucky education, especially in Marion County Schools. The award is given by the Kentucky Board of Education to business leaders who support and promote school improvement and equitable educational opportunities for all Kentucky students. Joining Higdon are Joe Kelly, former board chair for whom the award is named, state board chairperson Helen Mountjoy and Jane Higdon.

## Increased aid to schools gets support in voter poll

A recent national poll reveals that education is a top priority for American voters. Participants rated protecting and strengthening education of greater concern than health care, terrorism, national security, Social Security and job creation, according to survey results by the Public Education Network and Education Week.

The poll also revealed that voters believe state budget crises could slow the pace of school improvement across the nation. While many Americans favor the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, they are worried that states cannot afford to implement

it. Many voters say the federal government — not the states — should provide the necessary funds to implement NCLB.

The poll shows that voters want state and local lawmakers to know more about education, fight for more education funds, and hold schools accountable for performance. It also shows that — by almost a two-to-one margin — Americans would vote against lawmakers who fail to fight for adequate education funding.

For more information, visit online at [www.publiceducation.org/doc/NationalPollPressRelease.doc](http://www.publiceducation.org/doc/NationalPollPressRelease.doc)

## 'Condition of Education' summarizes national trends

A national report, the Condition of Education 2003, summarizes important developments and trends in education. The report includes 44 indicators in six main areas plus an analysis of reading achievement and class-

room experiences of students in kindergarten and second-year primary students.

The report is available online at [www.nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2003067](http://www.nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2003067).

## KASC offers schools new planning toolkit

The Kentucky Association of School Councils (KASC) has developed a planning process toolkit that allows in-depth analysis of CATS scores and related data by content area using a school-based committee process. Use of this step-by-step tool is recommended for schools that are analyzing data and revising their Comprehensive School Improvement Plans. Instructions give school-level committees step-by-step guidance on completing a study in each content area and reporting back to the school council.

## S4S can help students transition to college

Many high school students prepare for college, but they are often surprised by the knowledge and skills university professors expect of them. To help students smooth the transition between high school and college, the Standards for Success (S4S) is distributing college-readiness resources to help prepare university-bound students not just to go to college, but to succeed once they arrive. S4S is a three-year project of the Association of American Universities in partnership with The Pew Charitable Trusts.

To ensure that the material is widely available, the S4S project is mailing an "Understanding University Success" booklet and accompanying CD-ROM to public high schools across the nation, as well as to state education departments and university leaders. The S4S materials are free of charge.

Educators can use the S4S materials as a tool to help align their curriculum, standards and assessments with university expectations. For more information about the S4S materials, visit [www.s4s.org/](http://www.s4s.org/)

# Primary teachers at Morgan Elementary help students get ready for 4th-grade testing

By Dona Rains  
Paducah Public Schools

*The following article appeared in the April issue of "Candle Lighter," a publication of Paducah Public Schools. It is edited and printed here with permission.*

Jennifer Wiersma, a primary teacher at Morgan Elementary School, often told her students to "draw" an example. Then she learned from 4th-grade teachers that, to succeed on the annual Kentucky Core Content Tests, students should know how to "diagram" an answer.

"Being a primary teacher," Wiersma said, "I had no idea what was involved in the open-response and on-demand writing required in 4th grade."

In the "draw" versus "diagram" example, the difference was simply in the vocabulary – a difference that could be significant if the student doesn't understand a test question. In weekly core content meetings with all teachers of fourth-year primary and grades 4 and 5, the Morgan Elementary staff works together to ensure that students are prepared for the state tests.

Throughout the 2002-03 school year, the Morgan Elementary teachers brought new open-response questions or on-demand writing prompts for a group critique session each week.

"We went over each question three times," assistant principal Vicki Conyer said. "We looked at it, revised it and then reviewed it after students answered it."

The process helped students practice for the questions they would face on the state assessment, and it also helped teachers refine their teaching methods.



Fifth-grade teacher Linda Dean, left, and primary teacher Angela Feezor talk during a weekly review of student work at Morgan Elementary.

Fourth-grade teacher Diane Bach said writing weekly questions for subjects outlined in the district's curriculum and the Kentucky Core Content for Assessment kept teachers on track for what they should be teaching. When the teachers reviewed students' responses to the weekly questions, they could see how effective their teaching had been.

"The analysis of the students' work afterwards is as important as reviewing the questions beforehand," said 5th-grade teacher Linda Dean.

The district's curriculum director, Vickie Maley, said the effort is "ex-

actly what schools should be doing to develop their core content curriculum." She also applauded the teachers' camaraderie and willingness to help each other.

Conyer said that before the teachers started meeting, those who taught in the primary program didn't understand the demands (placed on teachers) in 4th- and 5th-grade accountability testing. Now the 4th- and 5th-grade teachers appreciate the support they receive from the primary teachers.

"If you don't teach in an accountability grade," Dean said, "you can't imagine what the pressure is like. This

is a very constructive way for us to come together and support each other."

For more information, contact Vicki Conyer at Morgan Elementary, (270) 444-5760 or [vconyer@paducah.k12.ky.us](mailto:vconyer@paducah.k12.ky.us) (or through the KETS global list).

Because of consistently high test scores, Morgan Elementary is one of eight schools chosen by the Partnership for Kentucky Schools to receive cash awards and program assistance over two years. It is the only school of the eight exceeding its academic goals. See details at [www.paducah.k12.ky.us/detail.asp?recordid=1232&main=Morgan&content=Honors](http://www.paducah.k12.ky.us/detail.asp?recordid=1232&main=Morgan&content=Honors).

*(Dona Rains is director of information services for Paducah Public Schools and a past president of the Kentucky School Public Relations Association.)*

Photo by Dona Rains, Paducah Public Schools

## Inside Kentucky Schools

A Kentucky Department of Education Production



30 minutes of news and features about education in Kentucky

- Second and fourth Saturday of every month at 5 p.m. Eastern/4 p.m. Central on KET
- Second and fourth Sunday at 3 p.m. Eastern/2 p.m. Central on KET2

Please check TV listings for air times on local cable stations.

For program information, visit [www.kentuckyschools.org](http://www.kentuckyschools.org)

Host Pia Cummings



# CATS

Continued from Page 1

tional and assessment accommodation;

- have used textreader or screenreader technology routinely to access printed materials in classroom instruction and assessment;

- have used the department's online practice area to prepare for Web-based testing.

The department's confidence in the online testing process also stems from a report issued by an independent research firm, Human Resources Research Organization. As part of its work for the department, researchers visited 12 schools to observe online testing in progress and to record student and teacher feedback about the testing experience. The report, issued in June, included these findings:

- Students and teachers seemed generally comfortable navigating the assessment.

- Because online testing is available only to students who use textreader or screenreader software for regular instruction, students taking the tests online appeared to have no difficulty using the software and seemed comfortable with it.

## Plan now for CATS Online '04

Most educators involved in CATS Online '03 say more of their students are likely to participate in the Web-based assessment in spring 2004. Preston Lewis of the Department of Education's Division of Exceptional Children Services recommends that schools start now to prepare students for a successful testing experience.

"Only students who are fluent with the textreader/screenreader software will be eligible for online assessments," he said, "so we urge teachers to give eligible students as much computer-delivered instruction and assessment as possible. Make sure they access the CATS Online Practice Area and have learned how to use the software to navigate content and complete open-response questions. We can't expect students to do well with online testing if they have not had extensive experience beforehand."

Lewis points out that the processes that qualify students for online test-

- Most test proctors said they believed the online test helped rather than hindered students in their understanding of test content.

- The online assessment appears to allow students to demonstrate content knowledge in a way to which they are accustomed, with minimal logistical problems.

The department is already working to improve the testing process for spring 2004. Planned improvements include an easier procedure for setting up the test in schools; more support for test administrators; making online testing available for the Macintosh platform as well as the Windows platform; making the online practice area available to students earlier in the school year (possibly as early as September); and clearer back-up plans in the event schools lose their Internet connections during testing.

*Additional information about CATS Online is available from Preston Lewis at [plewis@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:plewis@kde.state.ky.us) or (502) 564-4970; Linnie Calland at [lcalland@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:lcalland@kde.state.ky.us) or (502) 564-7168; or [www.kentuckyschools.org](http://www.kentuckyschools.org) (enter "#CATS Online" in the keyword/search box and click "search"). Lewis also can answer questions about IEPs and 504 plans, the documents that outline programs of instruction for students with special needs.*

ing are likely to yield multiple benefits. (See Page 1 story.) "Students who use this technology daily are gaining access to core content they couldn't use in print form. While it is too soon to say that using the software improves student performance, it stands to reason that greater access to information could lead to improved performance in day-to-day learning and on annual state tests," he explained.

Lewis reports that teachers have observed benefits from classroom use of textreader technology that extend beyond the computerized reading supports. As many as 60 percent of the teachers responding to surveys after last spring's online testing reported that students using textreaders showed improvement in vocabulary, sight-word recognition, reading fluency and comprehension. Thirty-two percent said students' word attack skills had improved.

## CATS Online Survey Highlights

After last spring's CATS Online testing, the Kentucky Department of Education surveyed participating administrative personnel, teachers and students. While response rates were relatively low (64 percent of administrative personnel, 54 percent of teachers, 36 percent of students), the participants' comments are leading to improvements for spring 2004 testing.

### What Students Said:

- 92 percent of the respondents said they liked taking the core content tests online.

- 84 percent said they could concentrate better when taking the test on the computer instead of with pencil and paper.

- 74 percent said they liked that they could work at their own speed.

- 40 percent said they liked taking the test by themselves (instead of having a human reader or scribe) and could stay on task better.

- Students said they felt less embarrassed and intimidated having a computer – not a human reader – to re-read questions to them.

- 93 percent said they believed they scored better by taking tests on computer than with pencil and paper.

- A very small percentage said they preferred human contact and the paper/pencil testing method to taking the tests online.

### What Educators Said:

- 88 percent of teachers responding felt it was easy to monitor students taking the test online.

- 88 percent of teachers said the design and layout of the CATS Online assessment worked well for students.

- Almost 90 percent of administrators and 80 percent of teachers said students appeared to like taking the tests online.

- 80 percent of teachers said taking the online test with a textreader was a preferable accommodation to having persons read the test to students with disabilities.

- 36 percent of teachers said students were able to keyboard their own answers to the online open-response questions. Another 28 percent of teachers said students used "keyboard scribes" to assist them. Several students chose to answer the open-response questions in the paper test booklets, and some of them required the help of a scribe.

- A small percentage said textreader software was not a preferable accommodation for students who had difficulty navigating through the program. Those students continued to need scribes or other aides.

### Glitches

- 60 percent of teachers and a majority of administrators said they experienced no textreader software problems.

- 68 percent of teachers said the CATS Online Web site worked properly.

- A couple of districts reported computer hardware and network connection problems. Most problems originated locally.

### Challenges

Educators reported these challenges in preparing students for online testing:

- scheduling practice time on the same computers students would use for taking tests;

- scheduling computer time to give students experience with textreader/screenreader software throughout the school year;

- making the software available in all classrooms;

- printing results of practice sessions;

- resolving interference between textreader software and certain system security and content management programs.

# Universal Design for Learning

## Digital textbooks now available for students with disabilities

To give students with disabilities access to textbooks in a format they can use, the Kentucky Department of Education is working with the Universal Design for Learning Center at the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) to make selected textbooks available in an HTML format on CD-ROM. This service is available at no cost to Kentucky school districts.

CAST is an educational, not-for-profit organization that uses technology to expand opportunities for all people, especially those with disabilities. For several years, Kentucky schools have used the center's Universal Design for Learning initiative to provide core content in a format more easily accessible to struggling learners.

Two components include the use of computerized reading supports (for example, Read and Write Gold textreader software by textHELP) and access to curriculum content in a digital format through electronic textbooks and related instructional material. More than 725 Kentucky schools now have site licenses to use textreader software.

Textreader software can be used by any student to improve access to print material. However, using the textreader to access digitized versions of copyrighted material is limited to students with Individual Education Plans or 504 plans.

The department now makes digitized versions of the several books

available to schools serving students with disabilities. (See chart below) To be eligible for this service, students must already be using a curriculum that includes the use of these texts, and they must already be using textreader software to access printed material. Under copyright law, use of the digital versions of these books cannot replace purchase of the hard copy.

Special education teachers who use these texts and want access to digital versions must first join the Digital Text Network to support compliance with copyright provisions and for inclusion in the database of users of digital text. The network is Kentucky's mechanism for identifying textbooks needed in digital format and for sharing digital content with educators throughout the state. The network will play a role in future digital content distribution to teachers in Kentucky.

For more information about joining the Digital Text Network, visit <http://kysig.louisville.edu/udl/dtext.htm> online. To request digital copies of the books listed in this article, contact Linnie Calland at (502) 564-7168 or by e-mail at [lcalland@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:lcalland@kde.state.ky.us) or Preston Lewis at (502) 564-4970 or by e-mail at [plewis@kde.state.ky.us](mailto:plewis@kde.state.ky.us).

For information on the Center for Applied Special Technology (CAST) and the Universal Design for Learning, visit [www.cast.org](http://www.cast.org)



Photo by Rick McComb

### Don't Miss the Bus!

Students stand in line to get door prizes from East Jessamine County teacher Tom Frisbie after they registered for school in a local park. Forty teachers from the school participated in the "Don't Miss the Bus" tour to several community locations prior to the start of school. Teachers answered questions, handed out school schedules and checked health immunizations for incoming students.

## ONE

Continued from Page 1

The board defined proficient for No Child Left Behind to mean the same as "proficient" in CATS. The board also will require schools to participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) if selected for the NAEP sampling.

Education Commissioner Gene Wilhoit provided information on the board's actions to principals and teachers in a "Back to School" e-mail message. A news release about all

board decisions at the Aug. 6-7 meeting can be found at the Kentucky Department of Education Web site: [www.kentuckyschools.org/KDE/HomePageRepository/News+Room/03-046.htm](http://www.kentuckyschools.org/KDE/HomePageRepository/News+Room/03-046.htm)

At its Oct. 8-9 meeting, the board will define "full academic year," a term that will determine which students will be included in a school's accountability for No Child Left Behind.

### Books Available in Digitized Versions

#### Harcourt Brace Social Studies

Grade 4 - States and Regions (ISBN 0-15-312099-1)

Grade 5 - Social Studies (ISBN 0-15-312101-7)

Grade 6 - The World (ISBN 0-15-312102-5)

#### SRA/Open Court

Level 4 - Anthology (ISBN 0075692481)

Level 5 - Anthology (ISBN 007569249X)

Level 6 - Anthology (ISBN 0075692503)



# Bulletin Board

Compiled by Joy Barr

## FALL CELEBRATIONS

### America's Legislators Back to School Week

This Sept. 15-19 event gives elected officials the opportunity to meet personally with their young constituents and to answer questions, share ideas, listen to their concerns and give them a greater understanding of the legislative processes necessary for developing effective public legislation. For more information, visit online at [www.ncsl.org/public/backsch.htm](http://www.ncsl.org/public/backsch.htm) or contact the state coordinator, Anita Taylor at the Legislative Research Commission at (502) 564-8100 or [anita.taylor@lrc.state.ky.us](mailto:anita.taylor@lrc.state.ky.us).

### Join 'Pledge Across America' on Sept. 17

President George W. Bush and U.S. Department of Education Secretary Rod Paige invite all American school children to join them at 2 p.m. EDT Sept. 17 in a coast-to-coast, synchronized recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance. This annual event sets the stage for year-long instruction of citizenship and American history.

For information and free teaching materials, visit [www.celebrationusa.org](http://www.celebrationusa.org)

### Kentucky Kids' Day

Teachers and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) members can find a variety of activities to celebrate Kentucky Kids' Day Sept. 23.

For ideas, visit online at [www.kypta.org/do/index.html](http://www.kypta.org/do/index.html)

### Safe Schools Week

"Safe Schools Begin With Me" is the theme of Kentucky's Safe Schools Week, Oct. 19-25. The Kentucky Center for School Safety has developed a curriculum guide that supports its campaign theme of "Healthy Choices, Healthy Lifestyles" to use for a link between Safe Schools Week and the classroom. Visit online at [www.kysafeschools.org](http://www.kysafeschools.org)

### American Character Week

Character Counts has proclaimed Oct. 19-25 as American Character Week. The national organization helps schools focus on character and service by providing online resources for teachers that include ideas for school activities and community service projects. Download the free materials at [www.charactercounts.org](http://www.charactercounts.org)

### American Education Week

For ways to plan a successful school celebration during American Education Week, Nov. 16-22, visit [www.nea.org/aew/](http://www.nea.org/aew/)

### KAHPERD conference

The Kentucky Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance will hold its fall conference Nov. 6-8 at the Galt House in Louisville. To register, visit [www.kahperd.com](http://www.kahperd.com) or contact Lonnie Davis, executive director, at (859) 622-1887.

### Geography fun & games

How well do your students know the countries of the Middle East and North Africa? Test their knowledge of these countries, often mentioned in news headlines, with a fun drag-and-drop map game. It's online at [www.rethinkingschools.org/just\\_fun/games/mapgame.html](http://www.rethinkingschools.org/just_fun/games/mapgame.html)

### Time for Kids Extra

Classroom materials are available for teachers to help students understand our system of democracy. This supplemental guide to Time for Kids, published by TIME Magazine, is designed for 4th- through 6th-grade students.

To download a copy or to obtain classroom quantities, visit online at [www.ncsl.org/public/trust/tfk.htm](http://www.ncsl.org/public/trust/tfk.htm)

### 'Kids Voting' activities

"Civics Alive" is an online curriculum available free of charge to teachers from Kids Voting Kentucky. The organization is a nonpartisan, non-profit group dedicated to increasing civic involvement among Kentucky's youth and adults and increasing voter turnout. On Nov. 4, students can go with their parents to official polling sites and cast votes on special Kids Voting ballots in participating counties.

To learn more about Kids Voting Kentucky, visit online at [www.kidsvotingkentucky.org](http://www.kidsvotingkentucky.org) or call David Greer, executive director, at (502) 223-8821.

### Arts Toolkit in Drama

Kentucky Educational Television (KET) has copies of the "Arts Toolkit in Drama" for teachers on a first-come, first-serve basis. KET, in partnership with the Kentucky Department of Education, the Kentucky Arts Council, the Kentucky Center, Stage One and other Kentucky arts organizations, produced this multimedia, Kentucky-specific resource to support the integration of drama into the core curriculum.

The toolkit includes four hours of video excerpts, two interactive CD-ROMs, a binder of lesson plans and other printed materials. For more information, send e-mail to [artstoolkit@ket.org](mailto:artstoolkit@ket.org) or call (859) 259-7294.

### Counselors' conference

The Kentucky Counseling Association will hold its annual conference Oct. 21-24 at the Galt House East in Louisville. Nationally known speakers David Kaplan and Carl Hurley highlight the agenda.

Get registration details online at [www.kyca.org](http://www.kyca.org) or by calling (800) 350-4522. Pre-registration deadline is Oct. 15.

### History teachers meet

"Beyond the Basics: Tools for Historical Thinking" is the title of the Kentucky Association of Teachers of History (KATH) annual conference at Georgetown College on Sept. 20. For more information, contact Carrie Dowdy at (877) 444-7867, ext. 4402, or by e-mail at [Carrie.Dowdy@mail.state.ky.us](mailto:Carrie.Dowdy@mail.state.ky.us) or visit [www.kyhhistoryteachers.org/what.html#conference](http://www.kyhistoryteachers.org/what.html#conference). Registration deadline is Sept. 12.

### KYSPRA conference

The theme of this year's Kentucky School Public Relations Association fall conference will be "It's Show Time." The conference will be Nov. 6-7 at the Marriott Griffin Gate in Lexington.

For a conference registration form, visit the KYSPRA Web site at [www.kyspra.org](http://www.kyspra.org)

*News for the Nation's Most Innovative Educators*

# Kentucky Teacher

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*News for the Nation's Most Innovative Educators*

# Kentucky Teacher

SEPTEMBER 2003



Photo by Rick McComb

## Booked Up

Macy Smith, a 10-year-old student at Collins Lane Elementary (Franklin County) balances library books on her head as she makes her way to class. Macy is one of approximately 646,830 students enrolled in Kentucky's 1,271 public schools.

